702 military leader (Asan) appointed by the chief.
[857] Each desam had its gymnasium (kalari) into which all retainer-Nayar boys were inducted at the age of seven. Their training in gymnastics and swordsmanship lasted nine years, after which they received their arms at the hand of the king
701 and were accorded the title of Nayar. After this age every able-bodied Nayar man was perpetually in military training until he reached the age of retirement or until he was obliged to succeed to the headship of his matrilineal property-group
[541] and retire to manage its lands. In peacetime, mock fights were organized between Nayars of adjacent villages or of adjacent nads, and jousting was conducted at the court for the entertain-
726 ment of the royal family. In war, the Nayars
[714] fought naked: their arms were the sword, bow, lance and the bow and arrow, though gunpowder was also used, at least by the more important Rajas. Battles between enemy kingdoms appear to have been stylized. Not more than 10,000 men were commonly brought into the field at one time, and severe loss of life was prevented by the employment of Nambudiri emissaries who, if fighting became intense, entered the battle field and arbitrated between its leaders. [32] If however the king or a chief were slain, his subjects must fight to the death until their honour was avenged by the slaughter of a corresponding
721 leader on the enemy side. The aim of such battles appears to have been solely to gain control over the military power of nads of adjacent kingdoms, together with certain payments of tribute by conquered chieftains, and also to gain